



1st Battalion, 5th Marines

February 2008

From Our Command

Special Points

Of Interest:

- * Company Updates
- * Pictures from Abroad
- * January Event Pictures
- * Upcoming Family Events
- * Halfway Dinner

Greetings from Kuwait...

Family and friends of Battalion Landing Team 1st Battalion, 5th Marines,

I hope this letter finds everyone in good health and, despite our separation, good spirits. Across the BLT, the men have been very busy conducting sustainment training on numerous live fire ranges here in Kuwait; also H&S Company and Golf Battery have received some enhanced training that will help us better support a wider array of missions.

On this end, time is steadily moving along and we have only a couple weeks left on the ground before we get back on ship. There has been no change to the current schedule as briefed in September. Rumors are swirling... they are just that rumors, so please if you are given "the word" and it comes from anyone other

than the FRO, KVC, or Company/ Battery KV, do not add to the hype by passing it along. If, or when, anything changes we will get word out as soon as possible. On a related note, for our interested Tiger Cruise participants, the deadline for applications is soon approaching. Please understand that we have zero input regarding the submission timeline. We understand your frustration with no "hard dates" and just a window, making flight plans and hotel reservations is difficult to do. As soon as we can, we will get that information out as well. Thank you for your continued love and support.

Until next month God bless and Semper Fidelis.

C.O. and Sergeant Major.



LtCol John E. Merna



Sgt Major Charles L.



H&S COMPANY

Family and Friends

Happy February from the desert, as all should know we are conducting sustainment training in the Kuwait at this time. We started the New Year with a port visit to the country of Bahrain. I would call it a "get ready for the desert stop." Everyone had an opportunity to go to the Naval Support Activity which was like any normal military base in the states, big PX, and plenty of fast food areas to gorge themselves.

As there continues to be no snow in the forecast, we did have some relatively cold temperatures upon our arrival in Kuwait, the S-2 denies ordering the weather, but it did send some people searching for their cold weather gear.

The S-4 did a superb job with the off load adjusting and overcoming the many obstacles faced when offloading a Battalion in a foreign country.

Our stay in Kuwait has been rewarding, this is the first major exercise for the Marines and Sailors of the USS Tarawa and the first time we have come together as a Battalion. Some of the early ranges conducted encountered some wind chill temperatures that dipped into the 10 to 20 degree range.

Most if not all of the Marines and Sailors have had the opportunity to go to the field and ensure their

weapons were ready to go and experience the vast and never-ending desert. The S-3 has worked tirelessly in ensuring that all training and operations started out and continue to run safely and effectively. The Tankers let their main guns do some roaring, and the Engineers have let off some big explosions and probably left some big holes. Scout Snipers and Recon have spent time working on their "individual actions," and some long range shooting and patrolling, the S-shops (S-1,S-2,S-3,S-4) have all spent some time conducting land navigation (mapping reading) and a force on force patrolling exercise. The Sailors from the BAS continue to offer continuous support and good doses of vitamin "M".

January saw the following Marines get promoted: Our Career Retention Specialist Ronald Dorval was promoted to Staff Sergeant. The S-3 shop had Michael C. Cinko get promoted to Corporal. Combat Engineers promoted Joshua L. Demiguel to Corporal, and Supply promoted Joshua G. Jacobs to Lance Corporal



Congratulations to Gunnery Sergeant Yaphet A. Grimes who keeps our Marine Corps strong and reenlisted for four years.

The stay in Kuwait has been quite accommodating, the Army food is great, and there is not shortage of it. There is a PX on every corner, but the highlight has to be the flavored coffee served up by Starbucks. January saw no let up in the support that our families and friends have shown us, Thank You!!!

We almost had our waterskiing day behind the ship, but a school of hammerhead sharks following us disrupted it. I recommended that the Recon Marines go in as safety swimmers, but the Operational Risk Management was too high. We will have to think of something else, until next month.

Semper Fi , 1st Sgt Eric D. Sheline



CEB Pit in Action

GOLF BATTERY

Hello from Kuwait!

We promoted three Marines on 1 February 2008: Lance Corporal Jill to Corporal and Private's First Class Viramontes and Wenzel to Lance Corporal. All promotions were well deserved.

We have been taking advantage of our time in Kuwait, filling it with any training we can take on. We have fired about 400 rounds thus far



and have been trained in the art of public order (riot control) by the Irish and British military. The Marines did a superb job at public order training and the execution of the final exercise. The final exercise consisted of role players from all units aboard this base as well as

British Army personnel. The role players threw wood pieces and other missiles at the Marines as they played out the scenario. We also went through petrol bomb (Molotov cocktail) inoculations. We were in all of our fire retardant gear and learned how to react to someone throwing petrol bombs while in a riot formations (no one was hurt). The article should be posting on the 11th MEU website as well as www.usmc.mil within a couple days. The invaluable training we are conducting here in Kuwait is keeping us busy and is worth it.

The chow hall and PX system aboard this base is great. We enjoy ice cream and well

cooked meals at the chow hall three times a day and the PX is huge and has everything you need, from snacks to electronics. We are in a "Free Mail" zone, which means the Marines can send free letters home, but it cannot weigh more than 16 ounces.

The tiger cruise applications are in and are being processed, please DO NOT buy a ticket to Hawaii. Our schedule is not set in stone, and we do not know exactly when we will be near or in Hawaii. Once everything is firmed up we will ensure all of the parties concerned receive the appropriate information.

If you notice any problems with pay, have any questions whatsoever; please don't hesitate to contact your Key Volunteer. Remember, all of you are important parts of this deployment, and we couldn't get through it without your support.

Semper Fidelis, 1stSgt Monssen

ALPHA COMPANY

Dear Family and Friends,

Greetings from Kuwait! The company has been busy in the past month. Your loved ones have had some unique opportunities to visit fascinating places and improve their military skills.

The company welcomed the New Year in at the port of Jebel Ali. Jebel Ali is about 20 miles outside the city of Dubai. Dubai is a thriving metropolis that is in the process of building the world's tallest building and three man made islands, and it will have 400 skyscrapers by 2012. Your loved ones were able to capitalize on tours that ranged from desert safari to city excursions. Overall, the visit allowed everyone to see a unique part of the world that most Americans do not have the opportunity to visit.

After the port visit, the company moved to Kuwait for sustainment training. Despite the perception of Kuwait being a hot desert environment, your loved ones quickly found out that the winters are quite cold. During our first training evolution,

with the wind chill, the temperature dropped to about 15 degrees. Despite the harsh conditions, your loved ones have remained in high spirits and have used this training opportunity to improve their skills and military knowledge. Some of the training has included weapons shoots, classes on all the equipment the company owns and a 9 mile combat endurance run with about 50 pounds of equipment. During our down time, the company has enjoyed the amenities that the Army provides on their camps. Some of these luxuries include a top notch chow hall, fast food stands and several stores. Overall it has been good to get off ship and have some space to move.

The following Marines were promoted this month:

- PFC Devin W. Atkins
- LCpl Andrew S. Li
- Cpl Shaun D. Garvey

As always, we would like to thank you for your prayers, love and support; the company could not function without it. You all are always in the company's thoughts.

Semper Fidelis,
Capt Ortiz and 1stSgt Offutt



**Alpha Company
Training in Kuwait**



BRAVO COMPANY

Dear Bravo Company families,

I am happy to inform you that your Marines and Sailors have attacked the new year with the same vigor and energy that defines us as a corps. We successfully offloaded from ship and have turned to training operations here in Kuwait. The Marines are maintaining their combat skills, weapons proficiency, and growing stronger as a unit.

I would like to reiterate that as a force in readiness your Marines and Sailors are ever vigilant to respond to an ever changing world threat. I know that based on current events there have been several rumors of possible extensions or other events. At this point we are still on track for the deployment, and we stand prepared to respond to the possibility of

an extension or combat operations. I am sure you are aware of this as the nature of our business. As such, I ask that you remain patient and remember that we will release information through official channels, when authorized, if one of these situations arises.

Finally, I want to once again thank you for your great support. Your support is a constant reminder of what we are serving and fighting for. I once again wish you a "Happy New Year".

Semper Fidelis

D. J. THOMAS

Capt USMC



CHARLIE COMPANY

Greetings from Kuwait to
all our Friends and Families,

Three months of this deployment have passed us by and we hope this letter finds all of you in good health and high spirits during this New Year. The month of January and the New Year of 2008 are off to an exciting start. There was an opportunity for some much deserved time off the ship and we are currently doing training ashore.

Charlie Company rang in the New Year in Bahrain, a small island nation off the east coast of Saudi Arabia. We were there for a few days and had the opportunity to shop, relax and do some sight seeing. Bahrain is a Muslim country, but there are western amenities, food and shopping, for the men to enjoy.

Quickly, after we left Bahrain, we landed in Kuwait for training ashore. We were greeted by a couple of cold and windy days in the field and on the ranges. Fortunately, those were the worst of the days. It's still cold at night and there has been some wind and some rain, but we have the right gear to deal with it and are making the most out of being ashore. No hot-hot days as of yet, usually the highs are in the low 60's and I think the hottest has been some where around 68 degrees.

Training has been fantastic. All the men are doing well and are into the drills that we've been doing. There has been plenty of ammunition, so everybody is getting multiple opportunities to shoot their weapons. We have been doing range exercises that include firing and moving, during the day and at night, to include using night vision goggles.

Sergeant Paul O'Donnell was able to take all the machinegun gunners to the range and fire over 32,000 rounds of ammunition. Besides the basic rifle and machinegun ammunition, we've been able to light things that go "boom" to include demolitions, claymore anti-personnel mines and rockets.

The 2 types of rockets we've been training with are the SMAW and the AT-4. The SMAW is mostly used to destroy bunkers, pill boxes and buildings. AT-4 are designed to destroy tanks, but can also be used against bunkers. Getting a chance to fire a rocket is rare and is always exciting to do and to see. Lance Corporals Greenough, Clarke, Pustulka, Edwards, Rutherford, Stoner, Marak, Falkner, Petray and Private First Class Baez all shot a SMAW rocket. Sergeant Edwards, Corporals Flores and Raymond, and Lance Corporals Cronin, Rutkowski, Buchak, Menchaca, Ruggirello, Valencia, Lombardo, Trosclair, Carroll, Harris, Irwin and Combs all shot an AT-4 rocket.

We will be here for a few more weeks, so be prepared for more training updates in the next news letter. Mail is being delivered regularly and we thank everybody for the letters and packages that come in. Please keep us in your thoughts and prayers as we progress through the deployment.

March or Die

Jay Lappe CO
Jared Ogle 1stSgt





WEAPONS CO.

Weapons Company Families,

We have been working and training hard this past month. It is amazing that even through hard training and austere conditions, the Marine's spirits remain high. This is undoubtedly due to all of the support from our families back home through emails, "MotoMail", and packages. Thank you for everything you do.

Weapons Company started off 2008 by stretching our legs on solid ground for the first time in awhile. Prior to landing in Kuwait, we celebrated the New Year in Bahrain. For a lot of our Marines, it was their first experience in the Middle East. Bahrain is a center of commerce in the region, which means there were a few small reminders of home. Marines had the chance visit the Hard Rock Cafe, McDonalds, KFC, and Chili's, if they wanted some familiar tastes. There were also many local shopping and dining establishments that allow you to experience some of the local culture.

Since landing in Kuwait, we have taken advantage of the many training opportunities that are offered here. The desert winters are cold and every bit as unforgiving as the hot summers,

but the added challenge has made our training even better. The Marines have excelled at every turn, and have showed an extremely high level of proficiency despite arduous conditions. One of the most interesting things about the training area is that we share it with multiple herds of camel and sheep. The animals use the area to graze on wild grass and bushes and will often walk right up to you. When we conduct live fire operations, we have the interesting task of driving the herds to the safe side of the road. Camel herding was not a skill we intended to work on out here, but we have worked hard to ensure that our Camel safety record has remained perfect.

We continue to take advantage of the great training opportunities here. Our next field evolution will take us right up to the Super Bowl. I think we will be able to get back in time to see the Patriots try for their perfect season.

We also had some recent additions to the Weapons Company Family. There are two Marines from CAAT 2 who had baby girls. LCpl Clark had a baby girl born in Louisville, Kentucky on 29 December. She weighs 7 lbs 3 ounces. Cpl Donovan also had a baby girl born in Camp Pendleton on New Years Day.

SSgt Washington's wife gave birth to a baby boy on December 30th in Watsonville, California.

The 81MM Mortar Platoon also had three new additions. SSgt Castro had a baby girl born in Dallas, Texas on 24 January. She was 3 pounds, 5 ounces. LCpl Pena also had a baby girl born in Geneva, Illinois on 3 November. She was 5 pounds, 18 ounces. LCpl Ryan Ortiz had a baby boy born in Augusta, Georgia on 14 November. He was 7 pounds, 6 ounces.

Overall, it has been a very good month and our Marines continue to perform extremely well. Thanks again for all the support.

1st Sgt Wilson

From Our Chaplain...

Hello again! I hope all is well with you. As we have been here in Camp Buehring, Kuwait, we have had numerous opportunities to take advantage of some great resources.

The USO representatives along with all the Religious Ministry Teams here have been making resources available to our Marines and Sailors through handing out free phone cards, internet and web cam access, and care packages. We have also hosted opportunities for continuing our United Through Reading program. Just recently, the USO along with MWR hosted a viewing of the Super Bowl. It was great for morale and appreciated by everyone.

Along with many of these activities and events, the Religious Ministry Teams from all of our armed forces services have been offering some great worship opportunities. We have services through the Post Chapel and Spiritual Life Center that hosts over 16 different religious services and studies for our Sailors and Marines each week! We have also been spending time in the field with the Sailors and Marines offering worship opportunities when they are away from the camp. Also recently, we had a Martin Luther King celebration and a USO sponsored "Third Day" concert.

As always, I, along with all the Marines and Sailors, would also like to thank you for the support you have shown us back home. Through post mail, email, phone calls, and internet, we have been able to stay in touch with you all. It has been a great morale booster for everyone to have such good contact with our friends and love ones. For me and my assistant, what a great privilege and opportunity it has been to serve your Marines and Sailors.

You are always in our thoughts and prayers. I ask that you continue to remember us in your prayers. Please know that we love you and miss you terribly. May God continue to bless you all as we long to see you again.

Sincerely, Ron O'Dell LT, CHC, USN Chaplain, BLT 1/5

You're invited to...

A Baby Shower

for
First Battalion, Fifth Marines' Pregnant
and New Mommies

Sponsored by St. John's Episcopal School

When: Saturday, March 1st
Time: 12-2pm
Where: St. Johns Episcopal School
30382 Via Con Dios
Rancho Santa Margarita, Ca 92688

Details: Come celebrate the life and love of your soon-to-be or new little darling! This celebration will SH OWE R you with:

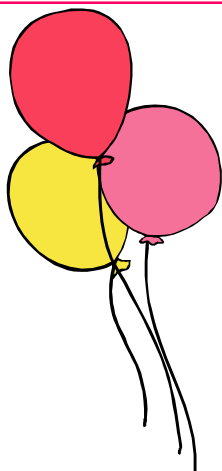
- gifts for your baby
- pampering items for you
- fun games and entertainment
- a catered lunch
- raffle prizes
- professional childcare givers and a labor and delivery nurse to answer questions

RSVP: Please RSVP to your company Key Volunteer by February 18th to reserve your seat and gifts for this event.

A shuttle to and from Camp Pendleton will be provided for those who need a ride to this event. Please let your Key Volunteer know if you will need this service.

Please let your KV know if you're having a boy or a girl or unknown.





HEARTS OF CARNIVAL FUN

saturday, february 16th
1:00 to 4:00pm
san onofre community center

face painting, cake walk and
raffles for children and wives



Lots of raffles
for awesome gifts

the HALFWAY DINNER

March 14, 2008
from 1830 – 2330
at the South Mesa Club

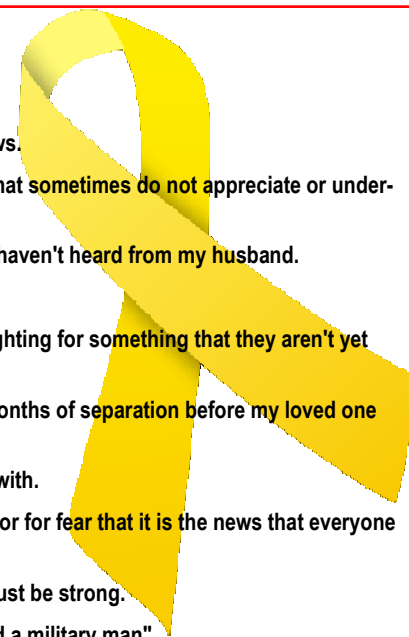
- ✿ Hawaiian Theme with a Tropical Buffet
- ✿ DJ/Karaoke ✿ Open Cash Bar
- ✿ Possible videotape to send to the 3 ships

RSVP by FEBRUARY 20!! Mailed RSVP must include \$5.00 in cash,
and include husbands rank and company. If E5 and below and **do not** want
to be included in the "coming home early" raffle, please note that on your RSVP.
(Mail to Cindy Burlingame 355A Scheyer Dr, San Clemente, CA 92672)

Adults only, childcare will not be provided.

Friends can come, but must pay full price....\$40.00

Dear Military Wife



I am an American woman that has no idea what is going on in the military other than what I hear on the news.

I have never had to let go of someone so that they could go fight for people that they didn't know, people that sometimes do not appreciate or understand what they are fighting for.

I have never had a sleepless night of worry because of a report that another bomb has exploded and I still haven't heard from my husband.

I have never had to wait for months on end to hold the one that I loved so.

I have never had to tell my children that daddy wasn't coming home tonight because he was so far away fighting for something that they aren't yet old enough to understand.

I have never had to hold my head high and suppress the tears as I hear that it will be at least another six months of separation before my loved one gets to come home.

I have never had to deal with a holiday away from the one that I thought I would share every day of my life with.

And I have never had to feel the panic rising in my heart at the sound of a ringing phone or knock at the door for fear that it is the news that everyone is terrified of getting.

For the reasons listed above, I can not tell you that I understand how you feel. I can not tell you that you must be strong.

I can not say that you shouldn't be angry, because you "knew what you were getting into when you married a military man".

I can not say these things because I have never had to walk in your shoes.

What I can say for certain is that because of your unselfish acts of bravery and your husbands willingness to stand up for those who see him as "just another soldier" --

I will never have to walk in your shoes.

I do understand that as a military wife you are expected to uphold a certain amount of control, but I never understood how you could do it, until now.

I have figured out that you are not like other women. You are of a special breed.

You have a strength within you that holds life together in the darkest of hours, a strength of which I will never possess.

The faith you have is what makes you stand out in a crowd; it makes you glow with emotion and swell with pride at the mention of The United States of America.

You are a special lady, a wonderful partner and a glorious American.

I have more respect for your husband than I could ever tell you, but until recently I never thought much about those that the soldier leaves at home during deployment.

Until this moment I could never put into words exactly what America meant to me. Until this moment, I had no real reason to.... Until I heard of you.

Your husband and his military family hold this nation close, safe from those who wish to hurt us...but you and those like you are the backbone of the American family.

You keep the wheels in motion and the hearts alive while most would just break completely down.

Military families make this nation what it is today.

You give us all hope and you emit a warming light at the end of a long dark tunnel.

Because of you and your family...I am able to be me.

I am able to have my family. I am able to walk free in this great land.

Because of you and your family, I can look ahead to the future with the knowledge that life is going to be okay.

Because of you and your family, I can awake to a new day, everyday.

I realize that you are a stronger person than I will ever be because of these things and I just wanted to take the time today to say thank you to you and your family for allowing me that freedom.

I will never be able to repay this debt to you, as it is unmatched.

However, I hope that you know that no matter where you are... what you are doing... what has happened today... or what will happen tomorrow...

Your husband will NEVER be "just another soldier" to me....

And you, dear sweet lady, will never be forgotten.

You are all in my prayer's everyday and I pray that God will bring you back together with your loved one safely.

May God Bless You!

Newsletter by: Sheline Design